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CORRADI



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Uncle's Redemption

I recently discovered my uncle was stupid. My grandmother kept my dead grandfather's WWI gas mask encased in glass. She also ate roses. That I could live with. My genius uncle suddenly proclaimed stupid was too much to bear. It left the entire family in an uncomfortable state of irony.

Uncle had failed to file his taxes, forfeiting thousands of dollars in returns. The whole family suffered, particularly the rose eating part. My cousin Elaine and I had acquired Grandmother's taste for roses.

The upkeep of the succulent flowers had become increasingly difficult. Grandmother was the shape of a sickle and could not garden. Neither I nor Elaine had a mind for growing flowers, just digesting. We had to resort to Mrs. Bee's Flower Shop to deliver a dozen roses once a day. Grandpa died late in life. His liver tried to be his heart. He drank to quell its passion. Yellow, the liver sat in his chest, fighting to be the glorious red heart. Near the end however, the liver just gave up and wallowed in its yellowness, melting into his other organs like butter over popcorn. Now, his heart could relax. The liver was no longer competition. Pink fluttered into white and just before the pink faded and the inside of his heart turned cold, he made his last wish. The gas mask was to be dug out of the attic and encased in glass. Grandmother was to eat a rose for every dead soldier killed by the Krauts in WWI.

Elaine was socially conscious. She took it upon herself to eat a flower for every soldier who died in WWII. I think she was going to work up to Vietnam, but I wasn't sure if police actions counted. At any rate WWII would take her sometime.

Immediately, after putting Grandpa down in the earth with an American flag resting on his chest, Grandmother called up the War Office in D.C. and found out just how many men died at the hands of the Germans. She didn't want to eat any more roses than necessary.

The gas mask came down from the attic with the stench of dead mice. Luckily, Uncle had retrieved the mask without Grandmother knowing about the mouse family that had disintegrated in its cracked eyes. Mud or dead mouse dust covered the glass, making it impossible to see through. Uncle tried to look. Before we had the glass box made, I would find him sitting in the living room peering hopelessly through the glasses. Grandmother wouldn't let him wash off the crud.

“Might be bad luck to wash it. Might disrupt your father’s last wish.” It remains unwashed.

He was her only child now, and had always been a genius. Daddy, now dead, had been stupid.

“You know he was a stupid baby.” A wasteful look developed in her craggy eyes, “I mean it’s no reflection on you. You can’t help it if your daddy was stupid.” His death was her proof of his stupidity.

Daddy’s mangled body after he was hit by an eighteen wheeler was proof that he wasn’t stupid. He was clumsy and drunk, but not stupid. The truck driver wore glasses. A bad prescription. Anyone could tell by the fact that Daddy had been hit while standing on the narrow strip of grass between the tar and the metal rail, not in the middle of the road.

Daddy’s death was more eventful than my grandfather’s; he withered like the Wandering Jew plant we kept out in the sun too long. When Daddy died we were all in the living room watching a made-for-TV movie, **The Manson Story**. The pixilated images captured my attention. Lite-Bright designs. I never heard the truck running against the metal rail. Glancing at the window Grandpa sighed. Elaine and Grandmother jumped. Uncle tried to make the dessert spoons clap together. No sonority achieved, he stopped. Ambled to the window. Peered through the glass, and scrunched his nose all the while.

Grandmother spoke first. “Well Jesus, Mary and Joseph, if it’s not your father, Kay. Wonder what he was doing on the highway?”

“Well, nothing now.” Clever uncle.

Grandpa’s death made two. My father, having no death wish, left us. With two recently dead people on the other side, you never know how close they can come to haunting and annoying you. Purgatory fitted both of them and it seemed a lot closer than Heaven or Hell. I ate roses along with Grandmother and cousin Elaine. Grandmother’s waist grew. It was filled with all the hormones of young men.

I ate roses to join Daddy. Roses are noxious to the human body. I thought they were. I read it in **Woman’s Day**, only the article didn’t mention that it was the stems and leaves, not the flower parts that killed you. Sour and velvet wrapped my tongue until it quivered. A buccal orgasm.

Daddy-the roses. Thick and unmistakable. Tasting Daddy. His voice. Bitter yet soft satin. I ate all the roses of the two bushes Grandmother had growing on the edge of the yard.

The stale swing sat rusty, six feet in front of the rose bushes. Swinging had always been a problem. If you swung too high your legs hit the roses and came back to earth bloody. A cat fight mid air.

Churning I sat on the swing allowing digestion to take place. **Woman's Day** had said just one rose was fatal to the human body. I had eaten at least thirty. I expected death soon.

Vomit. It swam in the toilet. A Monet of pink and yellow bile. Later, the fragrance turned rancid and the painting became a nightmarish work of modern art-mocking me with its hawkish eyes. The caprice of the turn of the Century looked at me and laughed. I had acquired a taste for roses.

Roses for breakfast. My father. His voice boomed at every dinner, threatening to shatter K-Mart china. Deep vibrations rumbled for my behalf. His eyes twinkled when he'd defend me.

"She can't help it if she's a little wild." The beginning of every defense. "You know I was wild too."

It never mattered what I had done, whether I beat up Tommy, the asthmatic boy, or refused to join the Girl Scouts. In Grandmother's eyes I was wild and my daddy had done it to me.

"You know she doesn't have a mama." His last defense.

The radiating white heat of Grandmother's wrath was now his.

"And you're the reason she doesn't have a mama." She'd mutter, "Chasin' that girl off with all your drinking and adulterous behavior." Her voice-the Living Bible.

Grandpa belched at this point. Elaine asked for the salt and would always insert the fact that she didn't have a mother either.

"Well, yours is dead, Elaine. Not chased off. Cancer is no sin to die of." Her look directed itself at me.

Uncle would begin his experimenting with the dinner at this point. Not a diversion. We all had seen a million times what mashed potatoes and corn could build.

I swallowed a rose, all the warmth of my father's arms followed the train to my stomach. I went to school. My father's love in my belly every morning.

For three years Grandpa grew roses and ate them to fulfill the dead man's wish. She became a sickle and sat bent in the rocker in the den. We had to buy roses.

Mrs. Bee. She never questioned our requests for fresh roses every morning. Mammoth hair, reminiscent of better days personally delivered the flowers.

Rose eating put a crimp in our finances. Uncle was too smart to work. He theorized. Occasionally he would fix a toaster or something else that wasn't broken. The government sent us checks. One for Grandpa because of his service in Normandy. One for Daddy because of his service in Vietnam (it was really Cambodia) and one for Uncle. A mimeograph machine had caught his arm and now it hung limp off the shoulder. The other shoulder, still erect, was tribute to Victor Hugo. The county school system blamed themselves and paid him not to come back and teach after he got out of the hospital.

Roses cost a lot. It was inconceivable that we would sacrifice our dead Grandpa's last wish. We pinched and scraped. Chocolate and coffee became a memory. Economics digressed to the point that we were forced to sell personal belongings.

My collection of Mark Twain was sold. Along with this went the entire Encyclopedia Britannica, to a woman whose son lurked around worm-like pushing up thick glasses. Grandmother sold her heirloom costume jewelry and Elaine sacrificed her autographed picture of Ghandi. Tears were shed, but our rose consumption had taken precedence in our lives.

The phone rang, rattling the dust of the mask. We recently sold our living room furniture with plastic covers included. The phone sat on the glass encased mask. An ode to technology and the war that fought for it.

A telephone taped recording, warned the head of the household, to file taxes. Uncle had a new purpose in life. He was tired of repairing and disrepairing all the electrical appliances. Papers flew and pens scraped as he delved into the last six years of our lives. The huge oak cabinet was emptied revealing over a thousand receipts from Mrs. Bee's Flower Shop.

He sad, bent as my grandmother, over the contents of the oak cabinet. Sitting on the desk Elaine and I watched his face discover America all over again.

"The government owes us over \$20,000 in returns." He proclaimed indignantly.

It was potentially a lot of roses. Through the door I could see the living room devoid of furniture. I could not even remember the taste of anything but rice and roses. All unnecessary food products had to go when finances were tight. Elaine envisioned hearty meals. Her eyes slightly crossed. Her stomach applauded.

White and sturdy. The envelope was posted. Six pages of tax information stuffed hungrily. We waited. We sold my grandmother's bedroom set. Tacky. Green and yellow double beds. They had bought them in an auction from the Lucille Ball show. We sold them for much less than first purchased. Roses for the next month. Rice and spaghetti sauce were the only other extra.

Grandmother had eight thousand and fifty two more roses to eat. Elaine had

lost count. She would eat a flower for every day of her life and never reach her goal. With every rose petal I ate, Daddy's image shone above. His arms sweeping me up in the scent of the flower.

Uncle wanted to redeem himself in the eyes of his dead father. Tax returns finally came. We were fined for tax evasion. A check for twenty-nine dollars arrived three months later.

The mask watched me as I ate my morning rose. Daily, Uncle sat on the floor in front of the mask. Standing to circle it for a while, his narrow eyes would eclipse.

The remaining furniture was sold. We sat on the rug. Our backs developed an Oriental posture. Mrs. Bee continued to come and deliver flowers. We bought them on credit now. She had a new hairdo. Grandmother stayed bent on the floor, moaning until she had her morning rose. Elaine cried with feverish alarm if Mrs. Bee was late. My blood rose and peaked. Saliva dried up and my heart raced at the sound of the pink and white van. School had long since become an impossibility for Elaine and me. We left and the county was too overcrowded to care.

Elaine had grown tall and her large hips protruded. Newspapers littered the floor. Elaine wanted to remain abreast of issues. Uncle contributed to the family by collecting the papers for Elaine in the morning. After they were read, we placed them under Grandmother. Her bones frayed and dry. She no longer moaned and complained.

Every rose I ate brought me closer to my father. I feed Grandmother her rose-mush. The petals crammed into her dry mouth. Eating one rose took her all day. Uncle meditated with the mask, remembering how it had been appraised at ten thousand dollars.

Shards of glass lay around Grandmother. Elaine's eyes hungrily searched the room. Uncle was gone. The mask had gone with him. Remaining was the phallus of the display case. The sun had not yet dared to make itself known. Devoid of all matter but Grandmother, Elaine and the newspapers, I waited for Uncle. My mouth watered for the taste of Daddy. It had been two days since my last rose. His scent grew faint around my lips.

Elaine mumbled about dead men and sex. Her body had grown to encompass all the nubile young men laying dead in a murky jungle.

Sunlight streamed itself into the living room. Roses occupied every area of the floor. In the corner were five rosebushes, each in various stages of development.

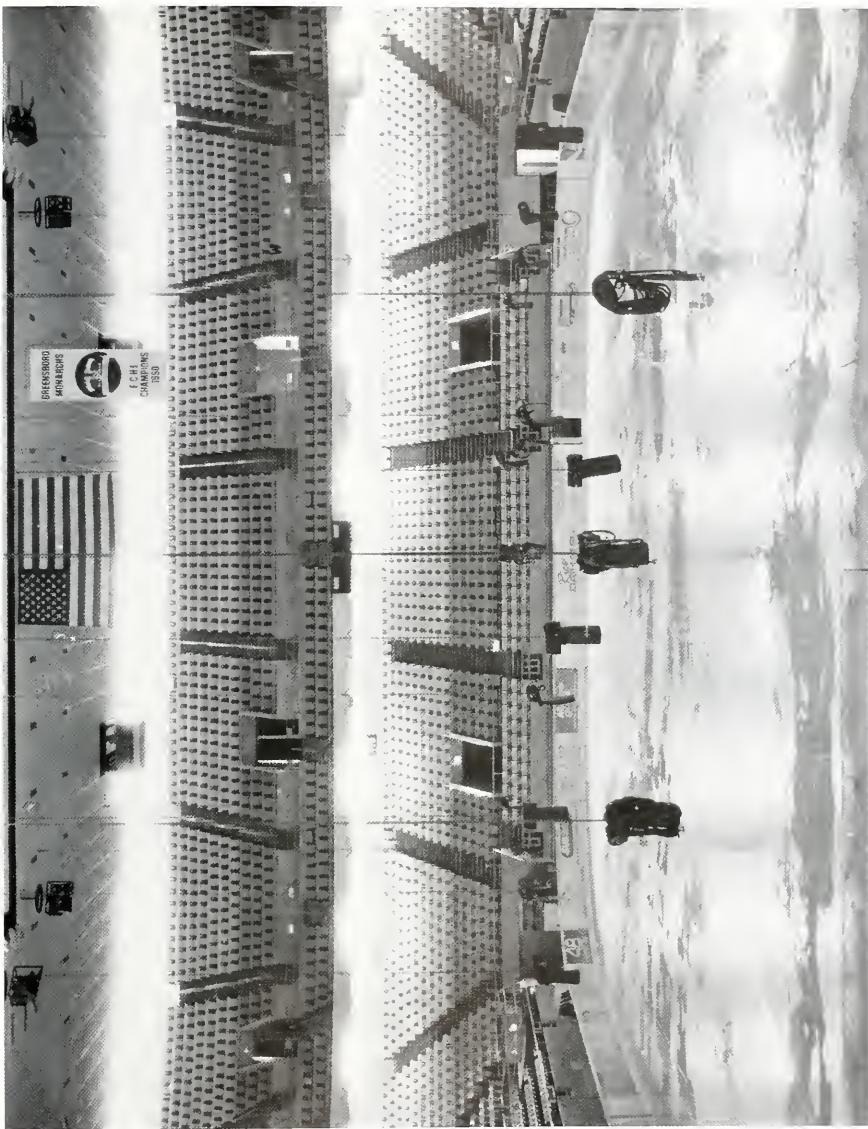
Elaine and Grandmother sat stuffing their faceless holes with roses. Uncle sat reading, **How to Grow Roses**. My hand reached. I smelled Daddy. Fragrance melted. I was full.

Meredith Hughes





commodity:information:



Tom Scitta



Greg Monroy



Amy Parker + Ed Smith

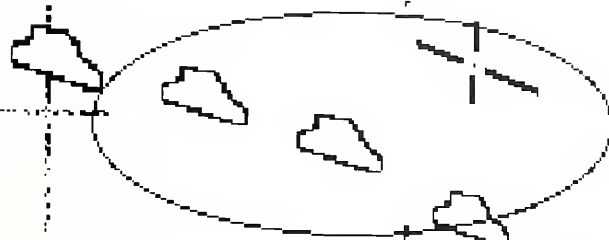


Brian Huskey

Untitled

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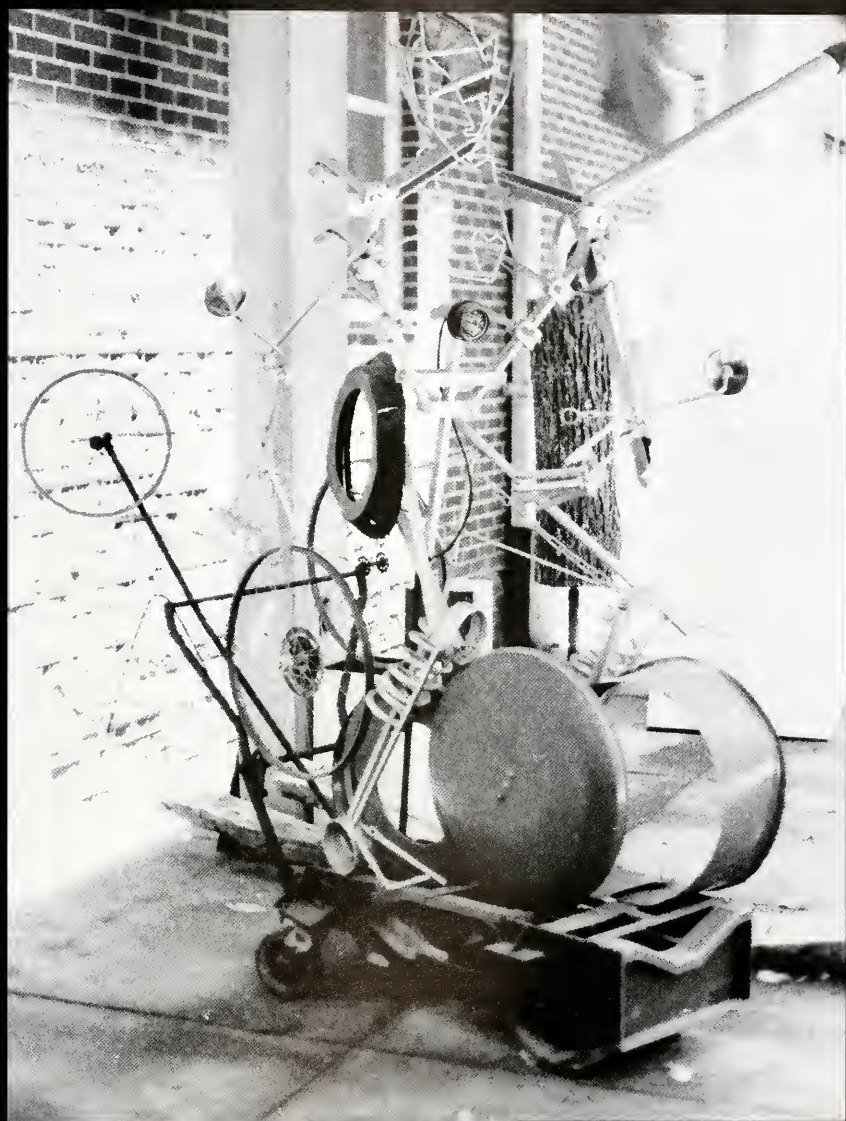
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Jonathan McLean



The Prodigal Son



Jonathan McLean

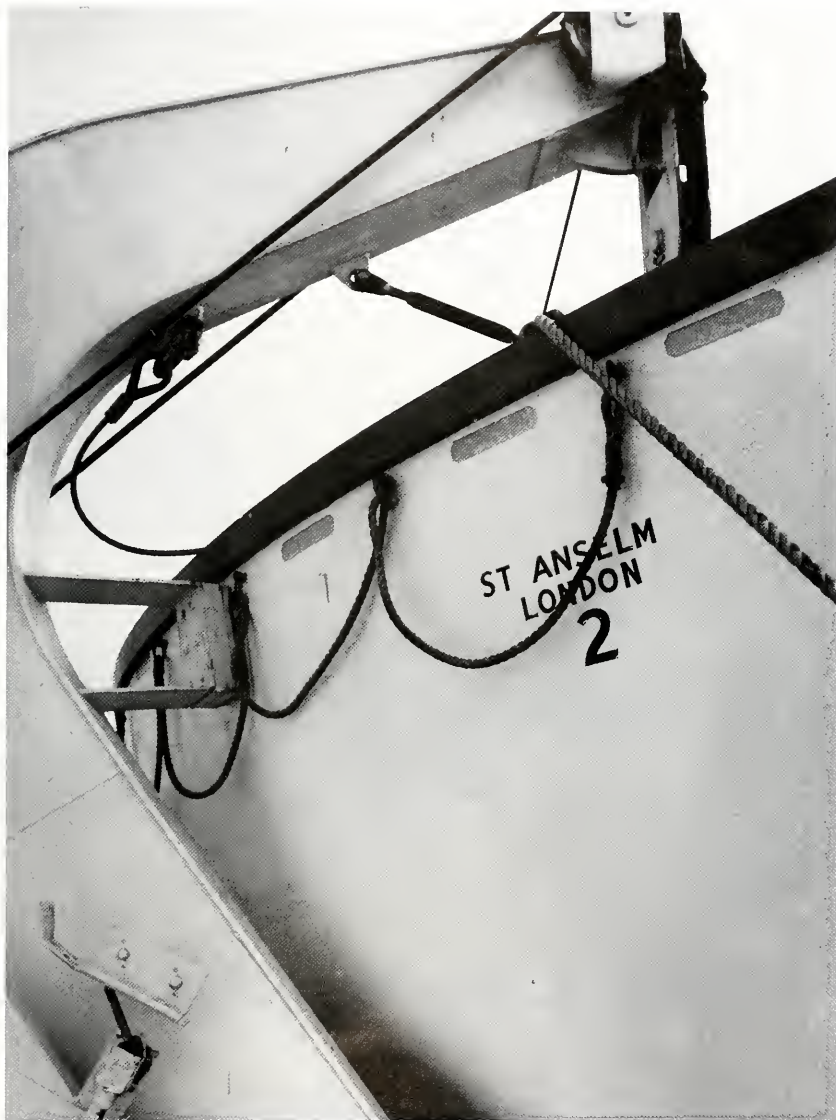




Matthew Curtis



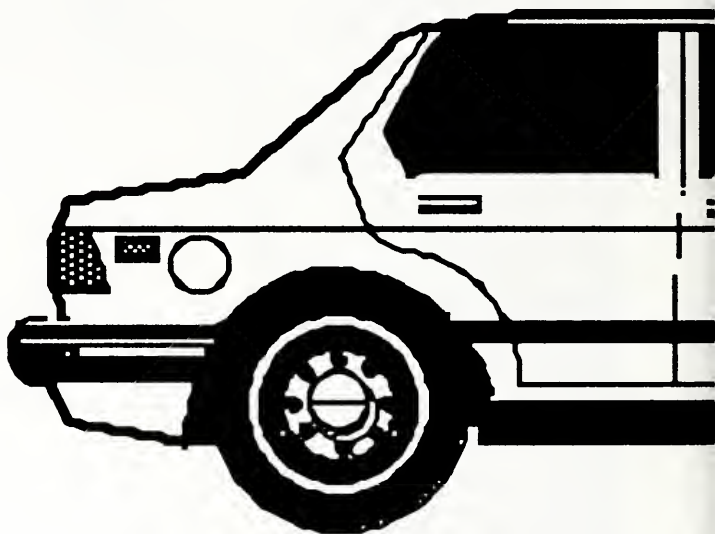
London, 7/90



The St. Anselm, 8/90

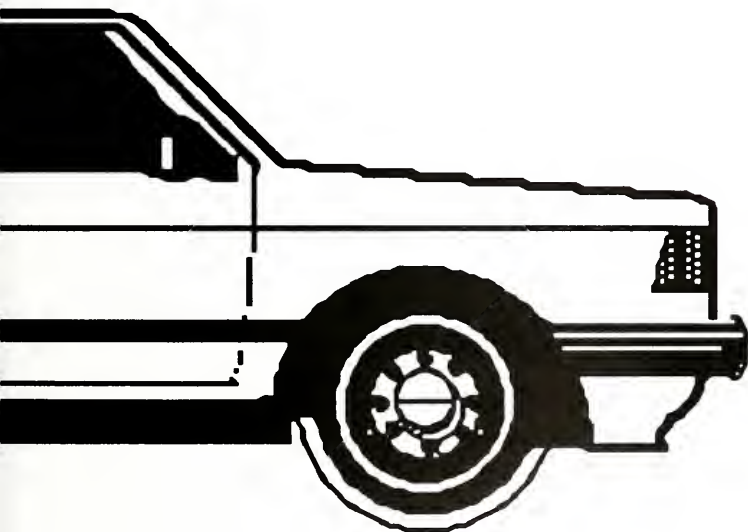


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Merry Moor Winnett cheerfully judged Coraddi's 1991 photography contest. She holds a BFA With Honors in Visual Arts from the University of South Florida. With a background in painting, drawing, relief printing and ceramics, she applies these techniques and concepts to her photographs, and much of her work is hand painted or drawn upon in its final state. Her most recent exploration is combining photographs with conventional fine print lithography, supported by an Emerging Artist's Grant from the United Arts Council of Greensboro. She has taught for the UNCG, Guilford College, Salem College and Davidson County Community College at various times between prolific exhibitions across the United States.



First Place: *The Performance* Brian Huskey



Second Place:

John Sanders

Third Place:

Cathie Somers





Contender:

Ernest Dollar



Contender:

Cathie Somers



Contender:

Cathie Somers



Merry Moor Winnett



Daphne

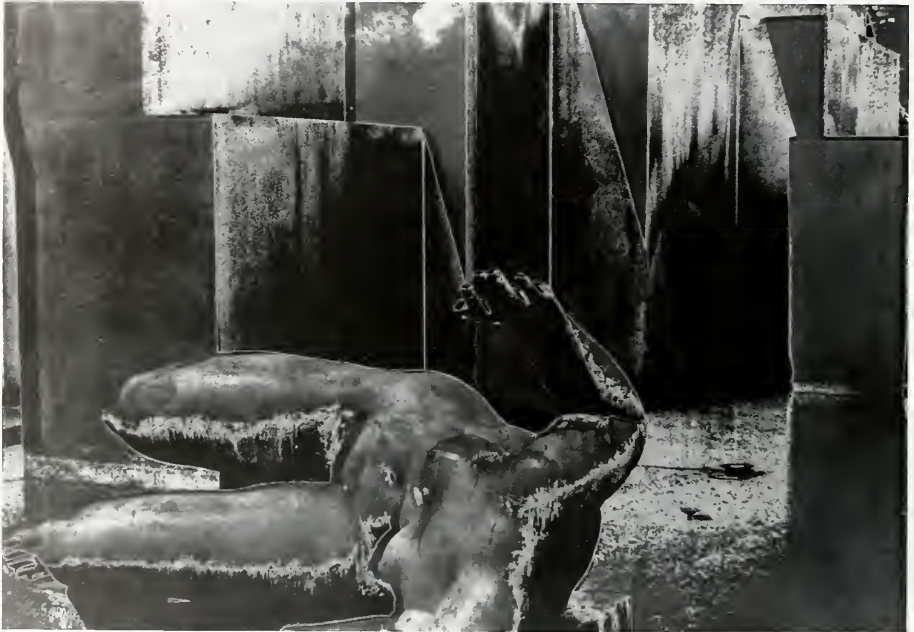


Merry Moor Winnett



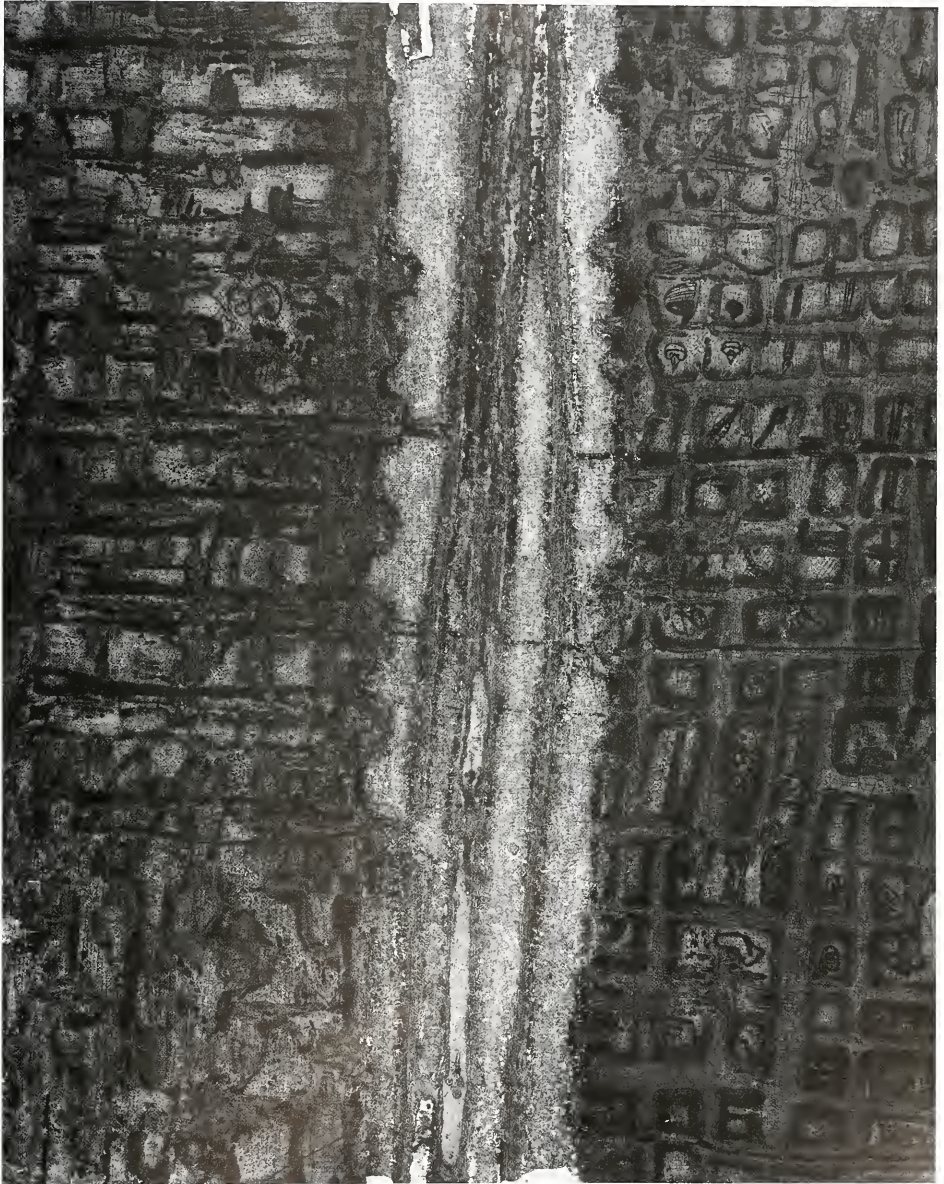
Improving the View

Merry Moor Winnett



Nuclear Winter

Lyde J. Zavaleta Holland



Red On Red



Lyde J. Zavaleta Holland



lullaby



Lyde J. Zavaleta Holland



child child

On moist nights in the years of satiated tongues
Lay an old man beside his wrinkled wife
Whose breath was menthol with denture glue.
Open, her eyes were as blue as the vein that ran upside Mary's pale breast
That was swollen with watery milk
Just like the old woman's thoughts.
After eating lukewarm buttered greens
They would sit on their screened porch.
The old man's eyes would fail to see the Tampa Nugget cigar tabs littering the planks
He would step on them and they would stick to the rubber soles
When he would swing his J.C. Penney brogans up to the railing,
The wind would blow and the cellophane would make an odd ticking noise.

Sometimes he would turn his long face to his silent wife
And say:
"You hear that noise, sweet pie? Sounds like angels knockin' on my door."

How to Glaze a Ham

I'll never forget the day Eddie Dew told me I looked like a monkey.
I told him he didn't even know what a monkey looked like, and hell
was where ugly acting people went.
When I turned away, I suddenly felt a thin warm rain on my
shoulder.
Up top that jungle gym sat Eddie holding his tiny organ in midair
like a concrete fountain.
I went home and stared into the oval mirror inside my cheap music
box and cried.
When Momma came in, I pushed away her long freckled arms- mostly
out of embarrassment.
Later I let her spread pink-smelling Avon Rosemilk lotion
All over my rib-shining back
And she whispered to me the severe law and averages of the power a
woman can have.
It was what allowed big ole fat women to be able to glance at any
man
And drip a thick semi-sweet glaze over his swollen esoteric brain.
Like the barb of poison in a Yellowjacket's abdomen.
I didn't understand her words, I just bent my puzzled head and
followed her into the kitchen

My pride
was a sunny rock
on which you plunked
your wide behind.
Now,
with you on top
there's nowhere
for the snakes
to bathe.

She pulled me out
of murky waters
like a fat catfish
caught on a
sweet smelling
bar of soap;
wrapped me
in the soft blue towels
of her affection
and wept over me—
warm salty tears
pouring off
of her face,
splashing down onto mine
there in our
delivery room.
My dear
mother, sister,
gentle friend;
I loved her
more than the fern
loves rain,
but she
poured her rain
around another.
And he
in answer,
green fronds
unfurled.

the beat aesthetic

Fred Murchison

sometimes, when folks
 hears the beat,
they don't really feel the beat.
ya know?
 and their movements are very
dis co mbob u late d to the eye.
sometimes, some folks says
 these other folks ain't got no beat.
co'se that ain't right.
 cause everybody heart beat.
 everybody beats they meat,
 or someone else's.
some folks, they beat they dogs;
 they beat they kids,
 they beat they wives.
some folks, they'll even beat you.
 if you lets 'em.
yeah.
 everybody got some beat.
problem is,
 some folks don't know
when they beating
and
when they's beaten.

Winter in Michigan

William Gau

My ears fall
off my head
my nose
disappears
My eyes water
a Kennedy assassination
lips peel
oranges
Old North knives me
in the back
the bastard

Mike Drennan

Photograph #2

There's an implicit trust in pulling the trigger,
heart arcing sideways
tracer highlights
in the jungle sky of American
prison minds.

A revolver,
holding a middle-aged Vietnamese
in a good ole' historical flak jacket,
pulls the trigger
Laughing thunder rolls fading
as his Marxist sub-conscious his passion
dies,
showing us in the end of these our sixties
where the war went.

FICTION CONTEST 1990



mixtopes

